

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #137

### The NIMBY Syndrome - Part 2



*Is he welcome in your backyard?*

### BEWARE OF TURNING VIGILANTE WITH THE HOMELESS

By Wanda Sue Parrott

**FOLLOWING** a question posted on Seaside/Sand City's Next Door online network, group resistance to homeless neighbors has overtly increased at Seaside and Monterey City Council meetings.

Will such tangible action force cities to overturn "Not In My Back Yard" attitudes in order to provide emergency-and-homeless shelters on the Monterey Peninsula?

Using initials to protect participants' privacy, I'll share a few highlights of discontent that started with this post.

#### Case Of The South Side's Missing Owner

January 23, 2017--CB from Del Rey Oaks asked:

*"Does anyone know the story about the person who now has a lot of miscellaneous/camping items across from the Safeway in Del Rey Oaks? I drove by this morning and was pretty shocked to see a large pile of items. Is that now allowed?"*

I scoped out the Fremont-Canyon Del Rey intersection during pouring rain and spotted a loaded shopping cart on the culvert above Laguna Grande Park's indigenous plants garden.

With the cart were several black plastic trash bags, a bicycle, and one drenched woman desperately struggling to cover shield herself against the stinging cold with a plastic tarp.

Circling the block to get a second look took 5-7-minutes. When I returned, the owner was gone but her possessions remained abandoned for days.

Finally, a metal "No Walking Allowed" sign replaced the pile and became a deterrent to foot traffic crossing beyond the sidewalk's end on the Seaside side of the park.

March 9, 2017—CP from Del Monte Grove Laguna Grande commented:

*If you look closer, the trash that you could see across from Safeway is now all down in the culvert on the City of Monterey side. It is a horrible mess. The creek also has lots of trash in it.*

### **Case Of The North Side's Unwelcome Neighbors**

The online discussions raised responses from residents in the upscale Seaside Highlands area.

Developed on former Fort Ord land near the Bayonet and Black Horse Golf Course, Seaside Highlands' mostly Mediterranean two-story homes range from \$750,000 to \$1 million. The homeless who camp on the outskirts of Seaside's answer to Pebble Beach are highly unwelcome in their cheap tents and tattered clothes.

February 18, 2017—EF from Seaside Highlands posted:

*. . . Who owns the land just off Monterey Rd. between the road and the high school? In recent weeks I've seen several full shopping carts in the bushes and younger/late teens to early-twenties homeless people hanging out in the area. Looks like a camp area is forming. It should be checked out before it becomes more permanent. Is that Seaside land? Highlands Homeowners Association? High school property? Who should I call to check it out?*

An ad hoc committee formed as BL of Seaside Highlands assumed leadership, admonishing against homeless abridgement of their rights of common decency by defecating and urinating on public and private property, and suggesting all distressed parties contact local law enforcement agencies in crisis situations.

Reports increased, including those that told of a homeless peeping tom in a tree, a young blond man who looked like a Goth, and a man who rode a bicycle and stared people down.

I posted my own thoughts that included advocating for public facilities in which such people can bathe and perform other acts of nature. . . . *It's like the wealthy man who felt empathy for the street people, so opened his home and invited them in. They trashed the place.*

### **Beware Of Becoming A Vigilante**

Burgeoning grassroots public resistance is a positive sign democracy is working. However, is there a point at which well-intentioned volunteers can become unintended vigilantes? Yes!

A Vigilante, as defined by Wikipedia, is: *a civilian or organization acting in a law enforcement capacity (or in the pursuit of self-perceived justice) without legal authority.*

At the Seaside City Council meeting on May 4, 2017, BL said that on May 3 he and several others dismantled a homeless campsite under the bridge near Seaside Highlands.

"It was a fairly elaborate building with 1-1/2 inch thick doors. . ." Inside, along with clothes and bedding, were food and even toilet paper. "There were people watching us. We found, on the city and high school side, camps and people in them."

Did those who destroyed the homeless person's shelter act like self-appointed storm troopers? Or was the dismantling done with judicious cooperation of law enforcement authorities?

In America, it is best to err on the side of justice than make a mistake from which you might never recover.

If a homeless person you don't want in your own backyard enters your life, don't take the law into your own hands. Call the police.

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